CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Break Request
Proposed Implementation Date:	March 1, 2013
Proponent:	Steve Witt—Lessee of State Lease #6449
Location:	Lot 4, SE1/4SW1/4, Sec. 19 & Lots 1-3, E1/2, SW1/4NE1/4, E1/2NE1/4SE1/4, Sec. 30 of T27N, R11E
County:	Chouteau
	State Industrial School-Sec. 19 Common Schools-Sec. 30

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

To break out approximately 220 acres of classified Grazing land into classified Agricultural land for a higher return to the school trusts. The lessee has requested to farm this acreage for small grain production.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Steve Witt, Lessee of State Lease #6449
USDA-FSA –Chouteau County Office
Mt. DNRC-Lewistown Unit Office
Mt. F, W&P-Region 4
National Wildlife Federation-Missoula Office
Audubon Society-Billings Office
Stuart Lomax- Private Contractor for Federal Farm Programs

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

USDA-NRCS-Ft. Benton Field Office, Lessee must remain in crop land and farming practice compliance for litter and soil loss tolerances.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The “No Action” alternative

The alternative to break out 220 acres of grazing land for small grain production

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter “NONE” If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

There are no unusual geological features present. The soils are all loams. The soils are: Kremlin loam 0-4%, Phillips loam 0-2%, Phillips-Elloam Complex 0-4%, Yamac-Havre loam 0-8% and Telstad-Joplin loam 0-4%. These are all Class 3 E Soils. No cumulative effects are anticipated with these soils.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There is a very low probability of any water degradation from this project. No cumulative effects to water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Pollutants or particulates will not be produced. No cumulative effects are expected.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The present grass stand including some natives and some introduced grasses will be destroyed. No cumulative effects are expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

Aquatic life should not be adversely affected. The proposed land breaking will remain back 100 feet from any drainages or the reservoir. If there are any avian species of concern present, they will be dispersed during the ground breaking process.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area. The project is a 220 acre tract area. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified several Species of Concern: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Eastern Red Bat, Hoary Bat, Merrian's Shrew, Dwarf shrew, Spiny Softshell Turtle, Greater Short-horned Lizard, Common Sagebrush Lizard, Common Tern, Long billed Curlew, Black-crowned Night-Heron, White-faced Ibis, Horned Grebe, McCown's Larkspur, Brewer's Sparrow, Foster's Tern, Baird's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Sprague's Pipet, Burrowing Owl, American Bittern, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared Larkspur, Carsin's Finch, Veery, Greater Sage-grouse, Brown Creeper, Black tern, Black-billed Cuckoo, Bobolink, Pinyon Jay, Bald eagle, Loggerhead Shrike, Franklin's Shrike, Clark's Nutcracker.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

There are no historical, paleontological or archaeological resources present.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

This project will not be visible from any populated areas. There should not be any excessive noise or light associated with it. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

There are no other activities nearby that should affect this land breaking project. No cumulative effects are expected.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

None.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Human health and safety will not be affected by this proposed project.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

Agricultural production will increase. The Class 3 E Soils will produce at county averages or higher for Chouteau County.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

New jobs will not be created. There are no direct or cumulative effects to the employment market.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The tax base will remain the same. There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes for this project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

Additional services will not be required. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The Montana DNRC requires that the lessee control soil erosion and maintain proper litter cover by state of the art farming practices acceptable by the USDA-NRCS. Furthermore, in order to break the proposed acreage, the soils have to pass the strict requirements set by Mt. DNRC's Land Breaking Policy. All soils within the project area have passed that criteria set by the policy.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Wilderness or recreational areas are not accessed through this tract. There is minimal recreational potential within this section. There will be no direct or cumulative effects on recreation or wilderness activities.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

Additional housing will not be a requirement of this project. No direct or cumulative effects are expected.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Disruption is not likely. There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

There should be no shift in the quality of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

Estimated return to the School Trusts are anywhere from a low figure of $18.00 per acre to a high end figure of $40.00 per acre revenue from this small grain production.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Barny D. Smith **Title:** Lewistown Unit Manager, TLMD-DNRC

Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith	**Date**: 11/30/12

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The alternative to break out 220 acres of grazing land for small grain production

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Minimal impacts are expected with this land break project. There are no rare plants or cover types present. The prairie dog town has been vacant for several years. No cumulative effects are anticipated.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Clive Rooney
	Title:	Area Manager, NELO
Signature: /s/ Clive Rooney		**Date**: 12/8/12